A Child Care Guide For Home Caregivers

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To the reader

You may already be a caregiver, or you may be deciding whether to become one. The purpose of this handbook is to give you information of all aspects of providing child care in your own home.

A *child care guide for home caregivers* is a reference book. As such, it is not intended to be read straight through from cover to cover, but kept handy for use when needed. A detailed list of the topics presented is included in the Contents pages, so that you can find the information you need as quickly as possible.

Providing child care demands a substantial investment of time and effort, knowledge and carefulness. The practical information in this handbook is intended to assist you, the caregiver, in making sure that the children in your care have a safe and healthy environment in which to grow. It may also help you to ensure a challenging and comfortable experience for the child, an experience that will encourage him to develop in the best possible way during his formative and impressionable early years.

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Introduction

It is important that parents in Ontario have a full range of high-quality child care services to choose from, and an essential part of such as comprehensive child care system is home based child care. By offering a child care service in your home; you have a very valuable role to play in Ontario's child care system.

Home based child care is an arrangement in which a person cares for five or fewer children in a private home. (Caring for more than five children, in addition to the caregiver's, requires licensing under the *Ontario Day Nurseries Act.*) Most home based child care is neither regulated nor supervised, hence caregiver and parents share the responsibility of ensuring that children receive high quality care.

Some home based care is supervised by provincially licensed home child care agencies. In these arrangements the home caregiver receives support, consultation and

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opportunities for training form the agency. The agency assures that the care provided fulfils the requirements under the *Day Nurseries Act.*

What is high quality child care? Research shows that caregiver knowledge and understanding of child needs, parent involvement in the overall child care experience, appropriate settings and routines, and a stable arrangement, all support the quality of care.

Providing high quality child care demands a major investment of time, energy, and effort, as well as a great deal of dedication, knowledge, patience, warmth, and understanding. The aim of *A Child Care Guide for Home Caregivers* is to help you provide the best home based child care possible.

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The caregiver

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- Making the decision
- Physical space
- A back-up person

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The caregiver

Caring for other people's children

There are many reasons why people decide to offer child care in their home. They may want to supplement the family income without having to work outside the home, to provide playmates for their own children, or to help out friends or neighbours who need child care, or they might simply enjoy the company of children.

Whatever the reason, an informal child care arrangement can provide a comfortable experience for a small group of children. This type of child care has certain features that some parents prefer. Brothers and sisters may be able to stay together in a family like setting, for example. Neighbourhood informal child care that offers carefully thought out learning activities may be the answer for many families.

Making the decision

If you are thinking about providing child care in your home, there are a number of questions you should consider before deciding whether or not you want to accept this responsibility.

- Do you truly enjoy working with children?
- Do you think you know enough about the needs of children to offer them the security, protection and learning experiences they must have in order to thrive?
- How many children do you feel you can care for and supervise well? Remember that under provincial law, you cannot care for more than five children (not including your own).
- What age group, or combination of age groups, do you feel most comfortable with?
- Are you willing to commit long hours to the care of children each day?
- What would be the length of child care day in your home? Take into consideration that some parents may ask to bring their child to you early in the morning on their way to work and that some may not be able to collect their child

until after six o'clock.

- Are you willing to make a reasonably long term commitment to the children in your care, recognizing that frequently changing their caregiver is upsetting for children?
- Are you capable of adjusting to a variety of situations and coping with emergencies and accidents calmly and efficiently?
- Do you enjoy good health and a generous helping of patience and warmth?
- Can you appreciate, accept, and feel comfortable with a child's culture, customs, and language if they are different form your own?
- Are you able to treat each child as individual and adapt your program to meet each child's need and preferences?
- How will you encourage frequent and continuous opportunities for parents to be involved in you care of their children?
- How will your neighbours react to an increased number of children in your home and the sounds of children playing outside?

The decision to accept children into your home will affect all the member of your family. Understanding all the possible effects on your family, and telling each member of the family what to expect will assist you in organizing your service better.

- How will the other members of your family react to the presence of children in you home and the time you spend with them?
- Will family members understand and co-operate in ensuring that a safe environment is maintained in the home?
- Could a family member who is on shift work, who is ill, convalescing, or elderly still rest during the day?
- How will your family react to possible delays in the evening meal or other household tasks and to an increase in the number of telephone calls?
- If you have teen aged children, will they find it difficult to study or to have friends over?

Your own children may be concerned about sharing your attention and their toys and possibly having the privacy of their bedrooms invaded.

Allaying their fears will require a special effort. Consider allowing them to decide beforehand which toys and treasures they are willing to share and which they want to put away; respecting their wishes about not sharing a special possession; gently suggesting to children who decide to put away all of their toys that a few should remain out; and giving them the responsibility of introducing the new children to your home.

Physical space

Before opening your home to children, you should consider which areas they will use, the wear and tear they will cause, and how they will affect the present use of that space.

Children need a safe, clean environment where they can reach most toys and play materials by themselves, and where they can feel part of the mainstream of activity in the home. You can adapt a centrally located area as a play area for them or designate different areas for different play activities. Here are specific questions to consider.

- Is your home physically set up to accommodate young children?

- Is there a quiet area where children can retreat to?
- Is there an open space where children can sit comfortably to eat meals and smacks?
- Is there a convenient washroom?
- Is there a place to nap or rest quietly?
- Are there indoor and outdoor storage places for toys and equipment?
- Is there an accessible and safe outdoor play space?
- Is there a place where children who are ill can be isolated and supervised?
- Is there adequate daylight or artificial light in each room?
- If you are considering care for babies, would you be able to take the extra precautions needed to set up your home? (See the chapter on Safety)

A back-up person

Your plans should include making arrangements with a back up person. This friend or neighbour (or member of your family) should be free to come to your home immediately to care for the children in an emergency, if you become suddenly ill, or if you have to drive to hospital.

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The business of child care

Providing child care in your home is similar to operation a small business. Careful planning will protect you and your family from unnecessary expenses or liability and help ensure a successful service.

Insurance coverage

While the children are in your care, their protection and safety is tour responsibility. Ordinary household insurance policies may not cover accidents involving them in your house, yard or car, or on outings. To cover all possible circumstances, you can obtain comprehensive liability insurance for your property and liability coverage for your car. Ask your insurance broker.

Zoning

Local, regional, and municipal by-laws may have specific zoning, fire prevention requirements, and other restrictions affecting homes that provide child care. You should check with your local municipal office to ensure that you are complying with these by laws.

Budget

Providing child care in your home will involve certain ongoing expenses. You can save money by planning ahead, watching for sales, comparing prices, buying in bulk, and contacting local businesses for free samples. You should also consider the following expenses.

Food

- Estimate the number of meals and snacks you will have to provide, based on how many hours a day the children are in your home.

Toys

- A variety of improvised play materials should be used, but some money will probably be necessary for the purchase and replacement of toys, books, and

records.

Art Supplies

- It may also be necessary to buy such craft materials as paper, crayons, scissors with rounded (not pointed) ends, glue, and paint.

Personal Hygiene Supplies

- You may have to allow extra money for paper towels, toilet paper, tissues, laundry soap, disposable diapers and first aid items.

Transportation

- There will be the additional cost of operation your car if you have to use it to transport the children to and from school or for other local trips. Installing seat belts if your car is not equipped with them could be another cost.

Special Events

- Remember to allow for materials, supplies, and decorations for special events, holidays, picnics, and birthday celebrations.

Training

- Include the cost of registration, books, and transportation if you decide to take training courses in first aid, child care, or related subjects.

Income tax and record keeping

If you are providing child care in your home, Revenue Canada considers you self employed and you must file an income tax return,

Every person operating a business is required by law to keep records for tax purposes. Keeping a file of your income and expenses will also help you complete your income tax form and will indicate whether you are charging parents enough to cover your child care costs and time. You should give parents receipts so that they can claim the child care tax credit on their income tax returns.

Your income is simply the amount of money you receive from for caring for their children. Your expenses are the costs you incur in providing this care; these must be supported by receipts. Deductible expenses include food, play supplies and materials, equipment, additional insurance coverage, long distance telephone calls, stationery and postage related to your child care service, transportation of the children in your care, training sessions, and such house hold items as paper goods and first aid supplies that are used for child care. A percentage of such household expenses as rent and utilities may also be deductible.

Remember, Revenue Canada requires proof that your claims for business costs and expenses are legitimate. It is your responsibility to provide that proof. The Taxation Department may not allow any unsupported costs and expenses. Contact your local District Taxation Office for more information.

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The partnership between caregiver and parents

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The partnership between caregiver and parents

Your ability to offer a successful child care service will depend in large part upon the partnership you establish with parents to ensure the health and well being of the children in your care.

Whether you advertise your service or are responding to a parent – initiated contact, you will have to be well prepared for a business negotiation. If initial contact is made by telephone, this is the time for you to explain the basic service you provide and your general expectations of parents.

These are some of the matters to discuss:

- Available vacancy (opening) for the child
- Location
- Hours of care
- Holidays
- Ages and numbers of other children in care
- Pets on the premises
- Costs
- Your experience as a caregiver

The interview

After the parents have given you some information about their child and the care she needs, your next step will be to agree on a convenient interview time. Whether you have known the family for a long time or they are complete strangers, your first meeting with them is an important one. Arrange to meet the parents and child in your home. At that time establish clearly all aspects of your partnership before reaching an agreement.

Typical questions from parents

Parents may ask you a number of questions.

- How long have you been providing child care? Do you plan to offer this service on a long-term basis?
- Will other adults be present during the day?
- Will other children be in your care during the noon hour or after school? How many? What are their ages?
- What activities and routines are you prepared to offer during the day?

- What are your feelings about children watching television?
- What type of meals will you serve? Will there be a morning and afternoon snack in addition to lunch?
- What rules or limits do you set for the children in your care?
- How would you deal with a child who is misbehaving?

Detailed discussions about the actual operation of your service may include the following questions.

- Will the fee be the same if parents have more than one child in your care?
- How and when should parents pay you?
- Will you issue a receipt?
- Will parents have to pay you if their child is absent because of illness, holidays, or emergencies?
- What are the arrival and departure times?
- Will there be an extra charge for late pick-up or for care offered on holidays, or weekends, or at unusual times?
- Who will care for the children if you are unable to because of illness, vacation, or emergencies?
- How will you deal with holidays – theirs and yours?
- What is your policy regarding children who are ill or convalescing?
- Will there be a trial period to see whether you and the parents are satisfied with the child care arrangement?
- How much notice do you require if parents decide to remove their children from your care? How much notice should you give parents if you decide that you can no longer care for their children?

- What precautions will you take to ensure the safety of the children? Have you developed an emergency evacuation plan in case of fire or accidents?
- What procedures would you follow in an emergency?
- Do you have letters of reference form parents who have had their children in your care?

During this interview, you should ask parents for more detailed information about their child.

- What is the child's state of health?
- What is the child's immunisation record?

- Are there any special health considerations you should know about, such as special diet, allergies, activities, toys, and other likes and dislikes?
- How much television is the child allowed to watch?
- What limits are enforced on the child's behaviour at home?
- Where does the child go to school? What are the child's study habits? Will you be expected to escort the child to and from school?
- How much supervision does the school-aged child require? Will the school-aged child be allowed to play at the homes of friends after school?
- Has the child been in child care before now? What kind of child care? Was it a good experience for the child? For the parents?

Parents should have other specific information to give you during the interview.

- What items will they supply, if any? (for example: food, formula, bottles, diapers, change of clothing, toothbrush, toys, infant furniture or equipment.)
- What are the parent's home and work addresses and telephone numbers?
- Can they give you a telephone number of a reliable neighbour?
- What is their Ontario Health Card or other health insurance number?
- What arrangements do they prefer for outings and special events?
- What are the names and telephone numbers of other people who may be picking up their child?
- When the child care arrangement begins, will they give you written permission to obtain emergency treatment for their child, if required?
- Will they give you written instructions for giving medicine or special foods, if required?
- How will they take part in the child's day-to-day experience at your home?

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Showing parents your home

In order to give parents a more complete idea of your service, they should be shown through your home. This will let them seen the physical set-up and reassure them that there is plenty of space for children to play and rest. The safety features of your home should also be discussed (see the chapter on Safety.)

The visit allows parents and children to see your child care service in operation. Observing other children busily involved in an activity gives a new child a chance to see what the child care experience will be like. It also gives you and the parents an opportunity to see how the child responds.

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Placing children in your care

The decision to place a child in child care is often difficult one for the parents. As with any business, you must assure consumers that your service is of high quality and that you will work hard to provide good care. Your ability to be open and honest will give

the parents a firmer basis upon which to make a decision about your child care service.

This will also help the parents prepare their child for care by another person; they can tell the child about you and what to expect in your home. However the child will still need your help to feel secure in this new setting. As the caregiver, you can be an invaluable support by making the transition into your home as smooth as possible.

Once you and the parents have agreed that the child will come to your home for care, it is important that you confirm all detail of the arrangement in writing.

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Maintaining the partnership

Ongoing communication between you and parents, along with mutual respect and support for their children, will form the foundation of a successful child care arrangement. You should arrange a regular time to discuss with parents their children's growth and development and how their children are doing. (You might wish to prepare written notes and questions ahead of time.) Remember to say something positive about each child and about each child's experience in your home and to inform parents of any concerns you have.

A relationship of respect and trust between caregiver and parents takes time to develop. If a serious disagreement arises, arrange to meet without the child present to discuss both sides; make sure the point of the meeting is not lost; discuss your differences calmly and one at a time; explain clearly what you believe should be done and allow parents to do the same; and if possible seek a compromise.

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Meeting the needs of the child in your care

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School – aged children

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Meeting the needs of children in your care

Easing children into child care

Helping children adjust to being separated from their normal environment and the adults who are important to them may be the first hurdle you encounter as a caregiver. There are several ways of encouraging children to cope with the unfamiliar and to feel secure in a new setting.

- Arrange for children to visit your home with their parents on several occasions before they begin child care.
- When children start to come to your home, suggest tot their parents that they remain for only a short time for the first few days, then gradually lengthen the time.
- Leaving home and parents for the day can be very hard for young children. Greet them warmly when they arrive, telling them you are glad to see them and want to be with them.
- Discourage parents from tempting to "sneak out". They should always tell children that they must go, but that they will return. Worrying that their parents may leave without letting them know will make children feel confused and anxious.
- Encourage children to bring something familiar from home, such as a favourite toy or an object they associate with their parents.
- Help children get started in an activity. Though they may not choose to join in right away, continue to include them as they watch the other children play. They will see that good things happen in your home and soon will feel safe about getting involved.
- Take children on a tour of your house, showing them where the bathroom is and where they will eat, sleep, and play.

A daily routine can be especially reassuring for very young children, for children who have been in many different child care settings, and for children new to child care. Their usual times for eating, sleeping, toileting, and playing, should be respected and largely determined by their needs.

Information from parents about routines and habits at home will help you to follow a familiar routine as much as possible. A reliable sequence of daily events becomes a source of security, because it reassures children about what is going to happen.

The length of time that children take to adjust to you and your home, and the ease of the adjustment, will vary. One child may take several weeks, another may be content right away. Before settling down, one child might express distress and outrage immediately, another might not react for a week.

Both parents and children will need to be supported through this phase. If parents are uneasy about leaving their children with you, the children, even infants, will sense this anxiety.

- Assure parents that their children will gradually get used to being in your care.
- Understand that it is not unusual for young children to revert to infant ways while adjusting to a new setting or while experiencing disruptions in normal eating and sleeping patterns.
- Do not begin anything new, such as toilet training, during these first few weeks.
- Give parents positive feedback about their children's day; for example, tell them if the children get involved in an activity soon after being left in your care.

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Going Home

The end of a day at the caregiver's home can be a difficult time for all concerned. Parents, children, and caregiver may all be tired and have little patience left. But with a little organization and preparation, problems can be avoided.

- It is difficult for young children to stop playing immediately and pay attention to parents who have just arrived. Tell children when it is almost time for their parents to arrive.
- Help children to put away their toys and gather any items they will be taking home. Both parents and children will feel better if everything is ready to go
- If you are exchanging information with parents about their children's day, be tactful and positive, and include children in a conversation with their parents. You may suggest that parents call you in the evening to discuss any concerns.

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Self esteem

The capacity of children to learn is strongly influenced by the development of a good feeling about themselves and confidence in their ability to do things. Children need to have the stage set for successful encounters with their environment and the important adults in it.

A sense of self and an ability to learn begin in infancy and are nurtured through contact with responsive adults who are relaxed and confident.

- Recognize and respond to all needs – food, rest, exercise, protection from harm, and activities suited to each child's level.

- Understand the physical limitations of each child and be realistic about what you expect.
- Provide children with lots of opportunities to make their own decisions and to learn from the consequences of their actions. About how things work and how to get along with other people. They will make mistakes, but as long as their efforts don't result in repeated frustrations and failures, they will keep trying.
- Offer encouragement and aid when children are frustrated.
- Show children that you are pleased with their accomplishments and efforts.
- Take care not to criticize or belittle children if their efforts are less than successful.
- Prepare young children for moving from one activity to another, explaining what to expect and giving them time to adjust.
- Understand and respect the life-styles and religious practices of the families of the children in your care.

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Effective use of space

Through the arrangement of furniture and play materials and the thoughtful use of space, you can make it easier to care for active children and give them a sense of belonging.

- Provide a special place for each child's collection of artwork and personal treasures.
- Arrange furniture in play areas to allow for small nooks where children can retreat for privacy.
- Provide a variety of activity areas where more than one type of play can be going on at the same time.
- Rotate toys to add new interest and provide toys that are suitable for the ages of the children you are caring for.

The arrangement of shelves and furniture can help establish boundaries for each activity and allow children to pursue and activity without interruption.

- Place toys and play materials where children can make they're own selections without having to ask.

The arrangement of furniture and equipment can be used to help children know what you expect.

- If puzzles or toys with small pieces are to be played with on a table, place them on a shelf or other surface near the table.
- If outer clothing is to be hung up by children when they arrive, install hooks within their reach.
- If children are not to run up and down the room, don't leave a long, open floor

space.

- If you want children to clean up their own spills and mishaps, have safe cleaning materials within their reach.
- Child-sized furniture and equipment will make the environment more comfortable and manageable. Child sized cups, for example, will make spills less likely.
- Using shelves instead of a toy box to store toys makes it easier for children to choose one without removing all of them.

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Setting limits on behaviour

Certain behaviour should not be permitted. Children cannot be allowed to hurt each other or to pursue an activity that is dangerous or will damage property. The rules should be few in numbers and well understood. Clear limits should prevent children from hurting themselves and others, while allowing ample opportunity to explore and develop.

Understanding the children in your care will enable you to step in and avoid problems. A child who is tired, bored, hungry, or in need of attention or reassurance may signal this need by misbehaving.

When you do have to step in, use a natural voice and keep the message simple. Words may be unnecessary; a touch on the shoulder or facial expression may be enough to remind a child of the rules.

Children learn behaviour by imitating how adults deal with situations and feelings. It is important to encourage children to express their feeling – their joy, sorrow, anger, frustration, or fear. Letting feelings out without hurting anyone or destroying property is a major feat for children. You can help them by teaching them to put their feelings in words or by suggestion a vigorous activity, such as pounding clay, when an angry outburst is looming.

Remember that children cannot follow a good example if you are setting a bad one. Hurting children, isolating them, shaking them, or shouting at them are not appropriate ways for an adult to behave. If a child is in the midst of an angry outburst, your job is to help her /him gain control. A hug and reassuring words can go a long way to help a child who has lost control. State calmly and clearly why you had to stop her/his behaviour; show them that you understand that they are angry and that you are there to help them regain control. Occasionally, you may have to hold a child until she/he calms down. The difference between holding and hitting him/her is enormous. Adults who hold a child are protecting them as well as controlling them.

Sometimes the child may have to be removed from a situation so that they have time to regain control and take responsibility for their action. However, removing a child for too long a period only produces resentment. Guilt or shame are not constructive and have no place in teaching appropriate behaviour.

When a child is hurt by another child, both children require your attention. The hurt child may need first aid and comfort. The child who misbehaved may be just as frightened. He/she needs to be told that their actions were wrong and cannot be repeated because it hurts other people. At the same time, the child needs to understand that you don't dislike them.

There are ways to minimize the situations in which trouble can arise.

- Plan a program that is suitable for the ages and needs of all the children.
- Give children a choice only when you intend to provide options.
- Show disapproval of the act of misbehaving, not of the child.

- Set suitable rules and limits and help children understand these and the reasons for them.
- Let children know that what they do and how they behave is important to you.
- Be consistent in ensuring that the limits you set are respected.
- Remember that it is very difficult for children to sit and wait even for a few minutes.
- Offer a substitute for what children cannot do or have. A child who is running in the house should be given an alternative activity such as playing with clay or play dough. A child who desperately wants a toy belonging to another child can be offered a different toy or activity.
- Keep instructions short and simple, especially for younger children. They can deal with only so much information at one time. Give one instruction and allow time for the child to carry it out before giving another.
- Discuss with parents the limits you have set for their children.

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Infants

Infants enter the world with the potential to be responsive human beings. They have feelings and needs that are uniquely there own. But whether they ever achieve their potential depends on their surroundings, experiences, health, and interactions with people.

Not only do babies need a good diet and good physical care in order to thrive, they also need affection and attention from a warm hearted and caring adult who responds consistently to their tears, smiles, and gestures, and their desire to explore the world around them.

Exploring the world

Infants who are offered ample opportunities to explore in a safe area with interesting playthings and an adult's attentions will continue to be interested in the world around them. Their knowledge of and interest in the world, their ability to make discoveries and absorb information, will blossom when their efforts are encouraged and activities that are neither too difficult nor too simple are provided.

Learning to communicate

Long before infants can use words, they can recognize the sound of their own names, the voices of familiar adults, and words that let them know that lunch is coming. At a year old, infants will understand much of what is said to them and may respond with baby talk.

All the waking hours of infants are for learning. At diaper changing times, there is a special opportunity for them to learn from you and interact with you. When babies kick energetically without their diapers, talk to them and encourage them to respond. Coos, giggles, and smiles, even tears, are the beginning of communication. It is important to communicate as often as possible during the day.

Separation anxiety

It is unusual for babies under the age of seven months to show signs of stress in a new situation or with unfamiliar adults. If parents and the caregiver have worked together to minimize changes in routine children adjust to child care without too much difficulty.

Between the ages of seven and twelve months, infants are more sophisticated at recognizing their environment and in knowing who is unfamiliar. Responses at this age to people outside their families may be stormy and include disruption in eating and napping. This is not a reflection on the caregiver or the care itself, but is caused by

newly discovered information; for example, that you are not a parent. Reassuring children in a calm and relaxed manner with hugs and a soft voice and providing consistent reliable care will help them through this stage.

Toilet training

In their first year, children are not yet in control of their bowels or bladder; therefore, any attempts at toilet training are premature. When children have been walking long enough to feel reasonably secure with this ability, when they have mastered sufficient words associated with toileting, and when they have given some indication that they are ready, then toilet training can begin. Both you and the parents should discuss how best to carry out the training. Find out what parents are doing at home to help. It is less confusing for children if expectations at home and at the caregiver's home are similar. Use a low chair or potty, whatever each child is comfortable with. Gaining control is often a lengthy process with many ups and downs. Accidents are part of the learning process, particularly if a child is ill, tired, or involved in an activity or any stressful situation. Each child gains control at a different age. There is no need to hurry it along. When a child is successful, show that you are pleased; when there is an accident; change the child into dry clothes quickly and calmly with out scolding.

School-aged children

School-aged children are gradually moving from a world that centres on the family to a new one in which school and friends are very important. How children feel about themselves and their competence is largely determined by how well they can do things, like riding a bicycle or reading, and how much they are liked and accepted by their peers. Much of the school day is organized for the children. In the caregiver's home, they can be allowed much the same freedom they would have in their own home, where they are able to select their own activities, read quietly, play alone, or with friends. School-aged children need a place in the caregiver's home where they can be apart from younger children. Understanding their need for time alone and permitting them to choose their playmates and play activities shows that you understand that they are more grown up.

You might encourage hobbies by helping children add to their special collections. Make available the tools they require to pursue their interests, and provide a safe place to keep their projects. Sewing supplies and scrap material, experiments in cooking and gardening, and children's tools for wood working all hold the prospect of a real finished product and allow them to practise and refine their skills. The arts and crafts materials you provide for younger children can be used by school-aged children – they will simply use them in a more mature way.

Encourage school-aged children to pursue activities that will help them develop muscle and body strength and provide a much-needed release for physical energy. Make available playthings, such as skipping ropes, balls, games, and construction materials that encourage group activities. Through group play, children encounter rules and practise co-operative behaviour. The experience the joy and frustrations of working in-groups and have the opportunity to develop and practise the skills necessary to word successfully with people.

School-aged children are continuing to learn how to cope with their feelings, how to express themselves, and how to show these feelings without hurting themselves or other people. Focus on strengths and show children that what they do and how they feel is important to you. Give school-aged children an opportunity to help decide on rules or limits and be certain that they understand them and that both know these limits will be consistently adhered to.

The result of a broken rule should deal with the misbehaviour and not insult or threaten a child's self –esteem.

Give some responsibilities to school-aged children. They can help with a number of household chores, such as being responsible for their work or play area, tidying up, or helping with the dishes.

Younger children often respond enthusiastically to instruction and attention from older children. School-aged children may be happy reading to younger children or showing them how to use scissors, a paintbrush, or other interesting tools.

As with younger children, it is important that there be agreement between caregiver and parents on a variety of situations that may arise with a school-aged child. Consider asking parents these questions.

- Is their child allowed to go to school or a local park unescorted?
- Will their child participate in after-school activities such as sports or clubs?
- Does their child have permission to bring friends over after school or to go to a friend's home?
- Does their child's school have your name, address, and telephone number if there is an emergency and they cannot be reached?
- Is their child expected to do homework while in your care or at home?
- A natural part of growing up is a steady stream of questions on a variety of topics. Questions about school, having babies, and growing up are the child's way of finding out about the world. You may want to discuss with parents how they deal with queries like these and tell them about discussions you have had with their child.

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Child care activities

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Child care activities

Although it is difficult to predict all the factors that will influence the activities of your child care program, here is a list of basic considerations.

- The number of children you accept into your home (up to five) should be determined by your ability to give the attention, care, and protection each child needs. You should be able to supervise all of them easily and be able to evacuate them immediately in an emergency. Accepting children in different age groups will require flexibility in routines, activities, and expectations.

- The time the children arrive and depart will affect the time and the amount of food and rest they should have. A child who arrives early in the morning may need more sleep and perhaps breakfast.

- Parents' expectations will influence your choice of activities and the routine of each child's day.

- School-aged children may be at your home all day on professional development days, also during holidays and summer vacations, depending on the arrangements you have made with parents.

- Infants, handicapped children, and certain other children may need special attention.

Children need routine times for eating and resting and a set of rules and limits that are reasonable and consistent. They need an environment that neither is so stimulating and noisy that is over-whelming nor has so few activities that it is boring. They need to be protected and safe, but they also need room to explore.

Learning through playing

Children learn through playing. They develop the skills necessary to get along with other people, use language to express ideas and feelings, acquire new skills and polish old ones, and learn to work out problems by trying out a variety of solutions. Children need activities and tasks that are challenging enough to hold their interest but that also fit their capabilities so that they feel successful.

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Toys and play

Table toys

- Provide a play area for toys on a table or floor that is away form the hub of household activity,
- Make up games that involve sorting objects by colour or shape. Children enjoy toys that require them to arrange items in a particular order for example, big to little. Also try matching games, commercially produced games, puzzles, peg boards, beads, and laces.
- These games can help children practise problem solving and learn about numbers, letters, shapes, weights, colours, and sizes.

Music and moving

- A carpeted floor will reduce noise, and soft, comfortable furniture or cushions will make these activities more enjoyable.
- Records, tapes, and simple musical instruments are good choices.
- Encourage children to sing songs and to accompany these with such movements as clapping, hopping, marching, or skipping.
- These activities will provide an outlet for energy, teach different means of expression, promote language development, and develop balance and rhythm.

Blocks

- Provide a carpeted area if possible, away from regular household traffic.
- Have lots of blocks in different shapes and sizes and cardboard boxes and sponges, which can also be used as building materials.
- Add wooden or plastic toy people, cars, trucks, and animals.

Imaginative play

- Provide old clothes and accessories, such as dresses, jackets, ties, hats, wigs, and handbags, and a variety of props, such as paper money and dolls.
- Transform cardboard boxes, shoeboxes, and baskets in furnishings for an imaginary house, store, hospital, or other setting.
- Set up a shatterproof mirror for children to view their creations.
- Imaginative play allows children to act out real-life situations and mimic the world of adults. It gives them an opportunity to practise talking and being social, and provides and outlet for expressing emotions and working

out problems.

Arts and crafts

- Children can use a table, the floor, or an easel as a workspace.
- Provide old shirts or aprons to protect clothing and have clean-up supplies handy.
- Materials can include long-handled paint brushes, sponges, finger paints, crayons, pastels, pencils, markers, and collage material, such as dry pasta, scrap material, clean egg shells, buttons and other sewing supplies, paste and glue, clay, plasticine, and play dough.
- Arts and crafts can always be counted on as a pleasant activity that encourages children to express their feelings and discover new material.

Science and nature

Use a quiet area that can accommodate a group of children or an individual child.

- Organize cooking activities using household equipment; provide magnets, a magnifying glass, books of simple experiments; collect leaves, stones, or feathers; plant seeds and show the children how to care for them; put up a bird feeder.
- These activities will improve children's vocabularies; give them responsibility for looking after something; improve their observation skills, and help them to learn to count and sort objects into groups.

Books and stories

- A quiet area with comfortable furniture or cushions is preferable.
- Display some books and magazines on a shelf where children can make their own selections.
- Read to children and ask them to make up their own stories, perhaps using a puppet as a prop.
- Reading improves children's vocabularies; gives them mew ways of expressing themselves; helps them understand that written word has meaning; introduces them to new situations; and can prepare them for upcoming events, such as a trip to the doctor or the zoo.
- By making up their own stories, children learn to use imaginations.

Water play

- Children can play water games indoors or outdoors.
- Put a small amount of water in plastic bins, old baby baths, or tubs.
- Add small toys and tools, containers for pouring, funnels, soap to make bubbles or scrub a doll, and things that float or sink.
- Always supervise children who are playing with water.

Sand play

- Indoors, a plastic drop sheet will protect the floor.

- Fill a basin or bin with sand; leave it dry or add some water.
- Supply digging toys, small containers, and toy cars and people.
- Always supervise young children.

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Television

- Television is rarely considered appropriate for very young children.
- Some programs, especially those designed for children, can provide a learning experience. Ideally, and adult should also view the program and encourage discussion.
- Television viewing should not be a regular activity. The set should be kept where you can control its operation.

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Vigorous activities

- Vigorous activities should be performed in a safe and accessible outdoor play area or indoors in an open space away from quiet activities.
- Equipment might include swings, a climbing structure, balls, bean bags, and old mattress, tires, toys with wheels, snow shovels, and sand pails and shovels.
- You might also create an obstacle course by providing mattresses on the floor to jump on, tables to crawl under, boxes to crawl into, and so on. Outdoors, or in a large open space indoor, you could add tires to climb over.
- Help children practise their balance by taping a line or string on the floor for them to walk along.
- This type of activity aids muscle development; helps children learn to judge space and distance; lets them experiment with different ways of using their bodies; gives them an outlet for their energy and feelings; and helps them feel good about their abilities.

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Learning about the community

- Explore your neighbourhood with children in your care.
- Arrange for a visit to the library, the police or fire station, the zoo, a community recreation centre.
- Looking forward to a trip can be enough to turn normally well-behaved children into anxious out of control children when they are not adequately prepared. Tell children where they are going, how they will get there, what they will see or do, what the limits or rules are, and when they will be returning.

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Selecting toys

- In any household, there are many safe and interesting materials that can be used in addition to commercial play material and toys.
- Select toys and materials that encourage children to be actively involved.
- Choose toys that children can control and that they can alter either physically or imaginatively.
- Include toys that can be used either by one child or by a group of children.
- Choose some toys and playthings that mimic adult tools and objects but are appropriate to the ages and abilities of the children you are caring for.
- Use toys that introduce a new concept or that allow children to learn new skills or practise acquired skills.
- All toys should be safe, durable, and capable of withstanding rough treatment.
- Invest in play materials that are versatile and not limited to one age group. Among these are commercial clay, plasticine, scissors and paste, paint brushes and paint, blocks, boxes, markers, crayons, coloured pencils, chalk, and pastels.

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Health

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Health

Healthy children are generally happy children. The way to keep children healthy is to make sure they have sufficient sleep, good nutrition, immunization, good hygiene, exercise, outdoor recreation, and clothing that protects them from the cold and shields them from the rays of the sun. As caregiver, you need to know the basic principles of good health, some necessary precautions, and how to deal with illness when it strikes.

Hygiene

Children learn good health habits from adults. By letting children see that you wash your own hands before meals and after using the toilet, and clean your teeth after meals, you will encourage them to follow your example.

Make sure children have there own clean face cloths, towels, lines and blankets, as well as their own combs and toothbrushes. Let them view the final effects of washing and brushing in a mirror.

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Exercise

Daily exercise promotes growth and development, and you can encourage children in a daily exercise routine, either indoors or outdoors, by taking part yourself.

- Consult with a physical fitness expert to find out what exercises are appropriate for each age group.
- Check with parents to make sure their children can participate in these exercises.
- Make sure that children bring appropriate clothing to wear.
- Begin the exercises slowly.
- Alternate activities to prevent boredom.
- Make it an enjoyable experience with lots of room and perhaps music and clapping.
- Provide opportunities during the day for vigorous play.

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Immunization

To protect your own children and the other children in your care, you should ask to see

the immunization records of every child you accept into you child care program. All members of your family, adults and children, should be immunized against disease. Since the introduction of immunization, incidences of diphtheria, whooping cough, tetanus, polio, measles, mumps, and rubella are now rare.

The following immunization schedule is recommended by the Ontario Ministry of Health.

- Two-month-old: Children should receive on injection that contains vaccines against diphtheria, whooping cough, tetanus and polio.
- Four months old: A second injection with the same four vaccines.
- Six months old: A third injection with these vaccines.
- After the first birthday: A single injection of the combined vaccines against measles, mumps, and rubella.
- Between 16 and 18 months: The fourth injection of vaccines against diphtheria, whooping cough, tetanus, and polio.
- The Ministry of Health recommends that children at age two or entering child care should receive the haemophilus B vaccine. This vaccine is given only once as a prophylactic or preventative measure for early childhood diseases.

Children entering school for the first time are now required to have full immunization protection.

The Ministry of Health also recommends that adults have a vaccination against tetanus, diphtheria, and polio every 10 years. Women planning a family should have their immunization up dated, especially against rubella, before they become pregnant. Adults working with children are encouraged to have a tuberculosis test every two years.

Adults born after 1957 should ensure that they have had a measles vaccine if they have not had the disease.

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Allergies

You should be aware of any allergies suffered by children in your care. Parents should explain the symptoms and how and when you should administer treatment, if necessary.

If you are caring for children with allergies, these tips may help you lessen their discomfort.

- Check with the parents to see if any product has been prescribed and whether they would like you to administer it when the child is in your care.
- Always wash new clothes, blankets, and linen before using them.
- Don't insist that children with allergies eat foods they dislike; the food might not agree with them.
- Keep the humidity in your home between 35 and 45 per cent; a humidifier can offer some relief for many allergy sufferers.

- Watch for symptoms of allergies when you introduce any new products to children.
- Post a list of each child's allergies in a prominent place.

If you suspect a child in your care has allergies, discuss your observations with the parents, who should take the child to a physician. Offer to document they symptoms and try to determine what food or product is producing them.

Allergies can go undiagnosed in a child for a long time and detecting the cause of the problem can be difficult.

Here are some facts to remember.

- Allergies can affect any part of the body.
- Symptoms from allergies include swollen eyes, swollen lips, rashes, eczema, hives, nose and lung congestion, mucus, muscle spasm. vomiting, diarrhea, and colic.
- An allergy to foods can cause nausea, diarrhea, vomiting, cramps, constipation, and respiratory trouble.
- The most common causes of allergies in babies are milk, eggs, and foods containing wheat.
- Babies should be watched carefully for any signs of an allergic reaction to new foods, medications, and products that touch their skin.
- Common causes of allergies in older children are milk, nuts and nut products, chocolate, eggs, fish, shellfish, citrus fruits, and foods containing whole wheat.
- Allergies can also be caused by soaps, ointments, cosmetics, cloth, plants, drugs, dust, sprays, pollens, mould, animals, among other things.
- Symptoms on the skin can be caused by an allergy either to food or to a product that has come into contact with the skin.
- Some allergic reactions, including reactions to insect bites, can lead to shock; if this occurs get immediate medical attention.

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When children are ill

As a caregiver, you must decide how much responsibility you are willing to take for children who are ill. It's a hard decision to make, but you do have a choice. Discuss the issue with parents at the start of your relationship, establish an agreement, and stick to it.

In reaching decision, weigh the benefits of caring for a sick child against the risks of infecting you and your family and other children and their families.

If you choose to accept children who are recovering from an illness which is no longer contagious, provide an area for resting that is separate from the other children but where you can hear and watch. Never leave a child who is sick or recuperating in a room alone.

Get written permission from the parents before giving any medication and obtain from the parent written instruction from the doctor regarding the dosage for the medication. You may find it helpful to maintain a record for each child receiving medication, including the dosage and the time it was administered. Always store medication where

children cannot reach it. If the illness does not require the attention of a doctor, let the parent decide the best treatment and the child's menu and activities.

Have a clear understanding with parents about what you will do if their child becomes ill in your care and you cannot contact them. If you have to take the child to the doctor, note the diagnosis and instructions for care and give them tot he parents, and ask parents to get in touch with their doctor.

You should take the following precautions when caring for sick children.

- Tell children to cover their mouths and noses with tissue when coughing or sneezing. Dispose of the tissues carefully.
- Keep faces free of mucus.
- Wash your hands after handling soiled tissues and diapers and before feeding a sick child.
- Avoid prolonged physical contact, but don't desert a sick child.
- Wash the clothes, crib, and toys of a sick child.
- Change your clothes when an ill or convalescing child goes home, because clothing can transmit germs.
- Be aware of the early symptoms of illness in yourself and children in your care.

Explain to the other children the situation of a sick child. If there is no risk that the illness is contagious, allow them to assist you, for example, by taking drinks to a sick child or reading a story. Ask them to help you provide the child with a calm and quiet environment by keeping their voices down and playing quiet games.

At the end of the day, you should up-date the parents of a sick child about the following points:

- the amount of medicine you have given the child and the times it was given
- what and how much food and fluids the child consumed
- what activities the child participated in
- when and how long the child slept
- any unusual coloration in faeces or urine
- any temperature fluctuations
- the child's mood
- the general progress of the illness.

Make sure that there is a constant and open exchange of information between you and the parents about care of a sick child. It is also important that the parents of the other children in your care are aware of any illnesses their children may have come in contact with.

Common symptoms of illness

When you see that a child in your care is suffering from any of these symptoms let the parents know at the end of the day:

- cold, accompanied by a tight cough, wheezing, persistent cough, and sore throat

- fever of over 100 F (37.8 C), or if the child seems ill even with a slight temperature
- diarrhea (watery or greenish stools)
- sudden decrease in appetite or increased demand for liquids, particularly if accompanied by other symptoms
- sudden decrease in appetite or increased demand for liquids, particularly if accompanied by other symptoms
- red, swollen, itchy eyes, or a rash with spots appearing on the chest or other parts of the body
- unusual paleness, excessive crying, restlessness, unusual tiredness, irritability.

For the following, it is best to let the parents know right away and obtain medical advice immediately:

- injury to the head and if the child does not become normally active again within 15 minutes
- continual vomiting
- unconsciousness
- bleeding

If illness is suspected

No symptom of illness should ever be ignored, particularly in infants and young children. The caregiver should be aware of the symptoms of general illness and always observe children carefully to recognize the first signs of illness. Attend to an ill child immediately. Note that the symptoms may be minor at first but may become worse during the day. Follow the procedure for emergencies that you have worked out with the parents.

Never make children feel guilty about complaining og illness. And don't worry about spoiling them by providing special attention; children need to know that you understand and want to help.

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Child Abuse

As a person working directly with children, it is important for you to be aware of the subject of child abuse.

The *child and Family Services Act* of Ontario says that *anyone* who suspects that a child is being abused or neglected should report these suspicions to the local Children's Aid Society. A person who reports suspected violence or neglect cannot be sued for doing so unless the intent is malicious or there are no reasonable grounds for suspecting abuse.

What is abuse? The law says that any child who has been physically harmed, seriously deprived of nutrition, care or affection, or sexually molested is an abused child. There are a number of signs that indicate that a child has been abused.

- A physically abused child might have bruises, burns, cuts, or scars.
- A neglected child might appear malnourished, frequently overtired, dirty, or

inappropriately clothed.

- A sexually molested child might have bruises, cuts, vaginal discharge, or venereal disease.
- An emotionally abused child might be unnaturally quiet and timid, overly active and aggressive, afraid of strangers or looking to strangers for affection.

Some abused infants exhibit what is described as "frozen watchfulness." Some children might also be too eager to please or manipulative, or they might demand constant attention or food.

Who would hurt children? Many of the people who hurt children are lonely or isolated. Others have been abused as children themselves; have had no opportunity to learn how to care for children; have had children who are difficult to handle; or have had a lot of problems in their lives.

People inflict child abuse under the guise of discipline or out of ignorance, frustration, hatred or anger. They need help just as the abused child does.

In the great majority of child abuse cases, a child is abused by a parent or an adult who is in a position of trust and influence.

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Children and Pets

Children must be protected from the pets in your home, and your pets deserve protection from the children you care for. Here are a number of ways that will help you keep a good relationship between children and pets.

- Pets should be supervised when around children.
- Be aware of the allergies that may be caused by cats, dogs, birds, or other pets.
- Children not accustomed to animals may be frightened and should be allowed to adjust slowly to the presence of a pet.
- Children should be cautioned about the pet's space and habits. They should be told to wash their hands after playing with a pet and before handling food and not to let a pet lick their face, especially their mouth (pets can transmit parasites this way).
- Small caged animals and aquariums should be removed to a room not occupied by children.
- Ensure that the stand on which a birdcage sits is sufficiently stable to withstand pulling or pushing; otherwise put bird and cage in a room closed to children.
- Children should be instructed never to approach an unknown neighbourhood pet and to walk away from any unknown animal, domestic or wild, that tries to make friends with them
- Cover a sandbox when it is not being used.

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Safety

Children learn safety from the adults around them. If you set a positive example by consciously and consistently taking safety precautions and if you instruct children, they will gradually learn to take responsibility for their own safety. Always explain to children the reason behind the safety precautions.

The basic safety precaution with children is never to leave them unattended.

In order to help prevent accidents around your home, you should adhere to the following safety checklist.

Safety in the home

Outside

- no broken bottles, cigarette butts, or other sharp or dangerous objects

- no loose steps or railings
- no sharp corners or slivers on play equipment
- no toxic plants
- all garden and lawn tools locked away, including barbecue fuel containers and lawn mowers
- a secure fence around the play area
- discard refrigerators and freezers only after removing the doors.

Inside

- no frayed extension cords or overloaded wall plugs
- safety caps on electrical wall outlets
- no smoking material such a lighters, matches, ashtrays, and cigarette butts; no plastic bags; no guns; no knives or other dangerous tools and utensils within the reach of children
- no toxic plants, examples include: hyacinth, calla lily, narcissus, dumbcane, daffodil, elephants ear, oleander, rosemary pea, arnica, castor bean, philodendron, mistletoe, dieffenbachia, poinsettia.
- windows and screen that can be securely locked
- alcohol and medicine stored out of reach, in locked cabinets
- stairways with gates and handrails; no accordion style baby gates with large "diamond" shaped spaces between the slats and large "V" shaped openings at the top.
- laundry rooms closed; washers and dryers not accessible to children
- balcony doors closed
- closed or locked doors to rooms that are off-limits
- covers on exposed pipes and radiators
- thermostat on hot-water heater turned down (the federal Department of Consumer and Corporate Affairs recommends that the thermostat should be set no higher than 54°C to prevent scalds and burns)
- smoke detectors
- emergency evacuation plan

Bedroom

- no diaper pins, other sharp objects, dangling strings from curtains, or blinds within reach

- no electrical appliances, clocks, vaporizers or heaters within reach
- no perfumes, cosmetics, or shaving lotions within reach

Bathroom

- drugs, medicine, cosmetics, and objects such a s razor blades locked in a cabinet; child-proof safety caps
- no electrical appliances, hair dryers, curlers, or radios within reach
- plastic or paper disposable cups instead of drinking glasses
- lock on bathroom door that can be opened from the outside.

Kitchen

- pot handles turned to the back of the stove
- all cleaners, poisons, soaps, bleaches, polishes, alcohol, and plastic bags out of reach
- safety locks on all accessible cupboards
- fire extinguishers in convenient places

Remember to knot all plastic bags or punch holes in them before throwing them out to help minimize the risk of suffocation. Read the labels of all chemical products and use the warning symbols as a guide to handling them.

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Water safety

Whenever children are playing near water, whether it's a bathtub, a backyard swimming pool, a toddler's swimming pool, a lake, creek, or well, they must never be left alone for even a minute. Even after small children have mastered swimming, they must always be supervised.

Never put more than a few inches of water in a toddler's pool. The water level should be low enough so that children can raise their heads to breath and call for help, if they fall on their faces. When constant supervision is not possible around wading and swimming pools, they should be drained and made inaccessible. Small children can drown in three to four inches of water. Never leave a bucket of water unattended on the floor if babies are close by.

If you own a pool, ensure that it is adequately fences and that the gate can be securely locked. You should refer to you local by-laws regarding safety requirements. The use of a pool, or any water-play areas, by the children you are caring for must be approved in advance by the parents of each child.

It is important that you know how to perform rescue breathing (artificial respiration). Your local Red Cross has information on water safety, including artificial respiration, and on how to keep a backyard pool safe for children.

Provided parents have given their approval, you may decide to take the children swimming. It is the caregiver's responsibility to ensure their safety. Be sure you have full information about such essential matters as water depth, current, water purity, and what is the bottom (rock, sand, mud, and so on).

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How to poison-proof your home.

There are several things you can do to poison-proof you home.

- Do not store medicines with other household products.
- Keep all poisons in the original container, never in cups, bowls, coffee tins, or soft drink containers.
- Keep vitamins locked up. To children any tablet resembles candy. Never suggest that medicine tastes like candy.
- Store all containers out of children's reach, including containers with child resistant caps.
- Keep all bottles, cans, and containers correctly labelled.
- Use a drug only for the child it was prescribed for.
- Avoid taking medication in front of children; they copy adults.
- Clean out the medicine cabinet regularly; flush old pills and medicine down the toilet or return them to the pharmacist.
- Move dangerous house plants (poinsettia and Jerusalem cherry are two examples) to a safe place; you might put them on a high shelf out of the way
- Keep your purse out of children's reach.
- Do not leave cosmetics on dresser tops or in the bathroom.
- Keep the telephone number of the Poison Information Centre or a hospital emergency department beside the telephone.
- Warn children never to eat plants or berries. On walks or in the field, they should never eat or pick mushrooms of any kind or colour, and should check with you before they sample any of the wild berries.

If an accidental poisoning occurs, or is suspected, act quickly.

- Identify the poison and the amount taken.
- Contact a poison information centre, a hospital emergency department, or the child's family doctor for assistance.
- If necessary, take the child to the nearest hospital emergency department. This does not necessarily mean you need an ambulance; a family car or an immediate source of door-to-door transportation can be faster.
- Bring the package, container, or suspected poison with you.
- The poison control centre will give you instructions. Do not induce vomiting unless advised to do so. A corrosive substance (such as oven cleaner, ammonia, bleach) will burn the child again if it is vomited. Petroleum-based products (such as kerosene, paint thinners, furniture polish) might be inhaled into the lungs if a child vomits and can cause pneumonia.

The Product Safety Branch

The Product Safety Branch of the federal Department of consumer and corporate Affairs is concerned with preventing accidents involving children. The Product Safety Branch regulates the design of furniture and toys for children and offers information on

their safe use and maintenance. Some useful tips are included in this chapter, however, for more details and the most up to date information please contact your public health unit, or write to:

Consumer and Corporate Affairs Canada

Product Safety Branch

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Transportation and safety

If you use your own motor vehicle to transport any of the children you are caring for, you should be aware of the safety precautions that the law requires you to take. According to the Ontario *Highway Traffic Act*, it is the driver's responsibility to make sure that the seat-belts of all passengers under the age of 16 are buckled up.

Effective Nov. 1, 1983, the law requires that all infants toddlers and pre-schoolers be appropriately and correctly restrained.

- Infants up to 9 kilograms (20 pounds) must travel in a rear-facing child restraint seat.
- Toddlers from 9-18 kilograms (20-40) pounds) must travel in a child restraint seat conforming to the requirements of the Canadian Motor Vehicle Safety Regulations. Tether straps are mandatory. When toddlers travel in a vehicle other than that of parents or legal guardians, a lap belt can be used.
- Pre-schoolers from 18-23 kilograms (40-50 pounds) must use a lap belt if they have outgrown the safety seat. At 23 kilograms (50 pounds), children should use the full seat-belt assembly.

The car safety seat must be securely attached to the car by the seat-belt assembly as recommended by the manufacturer. All harnesses, straps, and buckles must be properly adjusted and securely fastened.

The driver of a car carrying children should remember the following points.

- The back seat is always the safest place for children.
- Always travel with names, addresses, and telephone numbers of children and parents.
- Always carry a first aid kit.
- Never leave children unattended in the car, even for one moment.
- Check automobile insurance to ensure you have sufficient coverage.
- Make sure that the hazard lights (flashers) on your car are working.
- Carry an extra set of keys on your person.

Children travelling in a car should be given clear instructions.

- Keep hands and arms in the vehicle
- Do no put objects out of the window.

- Never touch the steering wheel or driving controls.
- Don't block the doors.
- Do not rough-house or make a lot of noise.
- Do not touch the door and windows handles.
- Stay seated.
- Always leave the vehicle from the curb side.
- Do not eat food or drink when the car is moving.

Safety near traffic

It is important that you understand and explain the rules of the road to children in your care. Even young children are capable of learning how to behave in traffic.

When you are on walks, point out all traffic signs and signals, use the crosswalks, obey crossing guards, and discuss pedestrian safety rules.

Discuss fully the dangers of playing near traffic; for example, that it is unsafe to retrieve a ball that has gone into the street and that it is dangerous to cross the street between parked cars.

If parents have approved their school aged child's use of a bicycle while in your care, make certain that the child understands the rules of the road for bicycle riding.

Safety in the community

Be clear in defining appropriate play areas.

Know your neighbourhood and instruct older children who are allowed to play away from your property of possible dangers. These could include:

- nearby construction sites
- creeks, rivers, swimming pools
- sewage areas and sewer pipes
- hydro poles and hydro rights of way
- heavy traffic intersections
- highways
- large commercial metal containers
- industrial areas
- abandoned buildings
- railway tracks

Emphasize to children that they should never take rides with strangers or walk with them, nor should they accept food or candy from strangers.

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Choosing safe toys and keeping them in good condition

Taking necessary safety precautions when you purchase and use children's toys can prevent accidents. Special safety regulations for toys sold in Canada exist under the federal *Hazardous Products Acts*.

Here are some tips for choosing toys and keeping them in good condition.

- When choosing toys, consider the ages recommended by the manufacturers as a guide and look for warning or safety messages on the package.
- Read carefully any instructions provided with the toy.

- Take the time to teach children how to use the toy properly.
- All toys should be kept clean and in good repair. Examine toys regularly for wear and tear. Loose parts, jagged or sharp edges and points can be hazardous.
- Discard a broken toy if it cannot be repaired.
- Mobiles have rods and strings that can easily harm children. Any mobile, whether attached to the ceiling, crib or playpen, should be placed well out of reach of young children.

Safety for babies

Protecting babies from harm requires extra safety precautions.

Furniture for infants

- no furniture that has any major damage.
- no loose parts that could come free and choke infants and that makes furniture or equipment less durable.
- a mattress that fits the furniture to prevent babies from rolling into excess space and becoming trapped.
- lost hardware on baby furniture replaced with proper parts, not something home-made.

Never assume that three- or four-month old babies cannot roll over or wriggle off the surface or climb out of a high chair. Babies should never be left alone when you are changing, dressing or feeding them. If you are called away for any reason, babies should be picked up and taken with you. The motor development of infants can change quickly. One day an infant cannot stand up in a crib and the next day ha can stand up and fall to the floor if the sides of the crib are not high enough.

Playpens

Under the *Hazardous Products Act*, it is illegal to sell a playpen, new or used, mesh or wooden, that does not meet the following requirements.

- The mesh should be mosquito-type netting to prevent clothing, buttons, or hooks from getting caught. Wide mesh netting should not be used.
- To limit its movement, no playpen should have more than two wheels or castors.
- All playpens should be stable and sturdy with walls at least 48 centimetres high.
- All parts must be free of rough or sharp edges, and hinges should be designed to prevent the babies from being pinched.
- Regularly check the playpen and either repair or discard a damaged product.
- Check for loose parts.
- Check for tears in vinyl rails or mattress pads. Small pieces, it bitten off, can cause choking or suffocation.
- Large (for example, stuffed) toys left in the playpen can be used as "steps" in

attempted escapes.

- Care should be taken to ensure that children are well clear of moving parts and hinges when you are erecting a playpen or lowering its sides.
- If children can climb out of it, a playpen no longer serves its purpose and should not be used.
- Avoid scarves, necklaces, or long pacifier cords that might catch or trap children.
- Never leave a child in the playpen if the sides are not fixed securely in the fully raised position.

Cribs and cradles

Safety standards for cribs first came into effect in 1973 and have been updated a number of times since then. Current regulations state that there should not be more than 6 centimeters (2.4 inches) between slats and there should be a double lock on the drop side.
Additional requirements include:

- Sturdy overall construction (no missing hardware, missing or broken slats, cracks, or sharpness)
- side height from mattress support to top rail of at least 66 centimeters (26 inches)
- a mattress less than 15 centimeters (6 inches) thick
- when a mattress is pushed into one corner, a gap of no more than 3 centimeters (1.2 inches) between the mattress and the opposite side or end of the crib frame.
- for more information, refer to consumer and corporate Affairs Canada "Crib and Cradle Safety Information" sheet, or contact your local public health unit.

Observe the following safety features, especially if the crib was made before the most recent regulations (1986) became effective.

- Avoid very soft mattresses; they can create 'gap traps'.
- Avoid cribs that have corner posts, attached ornaments, and cut-out headboard designs that can trap children or clothing and lead to strangulation.
- The mattress support system should be fixed to the crib frame.
- Adult water beds are designed for adults and should not be used for infants.
- Adult-sized pillows are dangerous in bassinets (baskets used as cribs); use only a well-fitting, thin, firm mattress.

You can also take additional steps.

- Look for loose parts that could come free and choke infants or make the crib less durable.
- A child should never be tied or harnessed in a crib or playpen. Slack cords or elastics should be avoided because they can strangle children.
- Remove bumper pads and large toys from a crib and/or a playpen when babies can reach a standing position. This is the stage when objects can be used as steps for climbing out.

- Repair broken slats and bed springs to prevent babies from falling through the bottom of a crib.

High chairs

Following are high chair precautions you should be aware of.

- Choose a chair with a wide, stable base.
- Ensure there is a seat belt with the chair, and that it is always used.
- Never leave a child unattended in a chair.
- Make sure fingers, hands, and heads cannot get trapped somewhere in a chair.
- Never assume children cannot under a chair's seat belt and tray.
- Keep older children from climbing onto the chair, even if it is empty.

Baby strollers

These precautions will help prevent stroller accidents.

- Use the restraining straps that prevent children from falling forward and tipping the stroller over.
- Never leave a child unattended in a stroller, and never load the stroller with heavy packages that could upset it.
- Inspect your stroller regularly. Look for sharp edges and tears in the upholstery. Check to see that the brakes work properly, and make sure that the wheels are fastened securely.
- Regulations for carriages and strollers came into effect in 1985. All products must have a manually operated latching device and a safety latching mechanism that engages automatically to secure the frame to the body of the carriage and stroller. In 1989 the regulation was revised to provide a clearer definition. Be careful with older carriages and strollers.

Walkers

A walker increases the mobility of children, and this brings them face to face with dangers they're still too young to recognize. Some models may tip when a child reaches over or moves onto a carpeted surface. In 1990 a voluntary standard for the production of walkers was agreed to by *Consumer and Corporate Affairs Canada* and the manufacturing community. The standard addresses design features which have contributed to injuries to children. One example of a design criteria of the new standard is a base that will not be able to pass through a standard sized door.

Walkers may show up in garage sales, in the home of a neighbour or in your own home. If you choose to use a walker, remember the following points.

- Never leave a child unattended in a walker.
- As an extra precaution, block all stairways by either closing the doors or installing gates and consider immobilizing the wheels.
- The condition of the walker should be checked regularly. Make sure that the walker will not collapse when you put a child in it.
- Look for a model with a wide base that sits level with the floor.

Pacifiers

Consumer and Corporate Affairs Canada has developed safety regulations for pacifies, which are set out in the *Hazardous Products Act*. These are some of the provisions in the Act.

- A pacifier should be designed with sufficient strength and durability to withstand reasonable force, even after repeated boiling, and it should not break down into easily swallowed pieces.
- A pacifier's guard or shield should be large enough and rigid enough to prevent children from inserting the nipple too far.
- Any cord attached to the pacifier should be short enough to prevent it from being hung around the neck.
- Avoid scarves, necklaces or other cords that might catch or trap children.
- All materials used in the pacifier should be non-toxic and, at the time of sale, sterile.
- Any ring or handle of a pacifier should be hinged, collapsible, or flexible so that it cannot be forced into the mouth, since babies often fall and roll on their faces.
- The condition of a pacifier should be checked regularly.

Rattles

Under the Hazardous Products Act, baby rattles must also meet strict safety requirements.

- Rattles should not break easily. They should be large enough so that they cannot be taken completely into the throat.

Physical space

Observing these guidelines ensure a safe environment for babies.

- Contents of rooms should be arranged to allow infants to move safely when they are out of their cribs.
- Heavy objects should be stable enough to support babies if they use them to pull themselves up to a standing position.
- There should be no unstable furniture or shelves that can fall over when babies begin to stand and grasp edges.
- Radiators and floor heating vents should be covered.
- Do not use slipper throw rugs.
- Electrical outlets should be covered.
- Know which equipment and furniture should be used only when an adult is present.
- Provide a clean carpeted area for babies to crawl on.
- Always protect babies from falls or bumping against sharp-edged objects.
- When babies are sitting alone, watch them carefully.

- Check the temperature of bath water (with a hand or elbow).
- Keep babies away from stairways; a latched gate is one way. Large "V" accordion style wooden baby gates were banned in 1990 under the *Hazardous Products Act*.

Babies with older children

- Never leave an infant in the care of another child

Toys

Choosing toys for babies requires special care.

- Some toys can catch fire if they are too close to a lighted stove or fireplace.
- Toys that are safe for an older child can be dangerous for an infant.
- Check toys for sharp edges, removable pieces, pieces that can be bitten off, and small objects that can be swallowed.
- Babies will put anything into their mouths, so even commonplace items can be dangerous to them.
- Mobiles can be dangerous if they are within the reach of infants.

Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (Crib Death)

There has been a considerable amount of research in recent years into Sudden Infant Death syndrome (SIDS) or crib death.

When caring for infants, especially very young infants, it is advisable to check periodically while they are sleeping. A knowledge of artificial respiration techniques for babies is recommended.

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Emergencies

If there is an emergency, it is important that you act quickly.

- Meet the emergency calmly and quietly.
- Remain in control of the situation.
- Record all information (even if it appears minor) for insurance purposes and because your records may indicate an unsafe feature in your home.

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First aid

A first aid kit is only useful if you can find it easily and quickly and if it contains the items you need. At home, keep the first aid kit in the same place all the time. Always take along a first aid kit when you travel.

Check the contents of the kit regularly. The Canadian Red Cross Society recommends that a first aid kit contain at least the following items:

- First aid manual
- Adhesive tape
- Tweezers
- Safety pins
- Dressings (gauze)
- Triangular bandages (16)
- Adhesive dressing strips
- pencil and note pad
- Emergency telephone numbers
- Change for a pay telephone
- Blanket
- Scissors
- Clean, water-proof container

First aid courses

First aid courses can be a great help to adults caring for young children.

The Canadian Red Cross Society provides an Emergency First Aid Course, which teaches basic skills to deal with:

- breathing emergencies
- severe bleeding
- shock
- poisoning
- loss of consciousness

This course is a minimum of six hours.

The Society also offers a Standard First Aid Course, which teaches the basic skills listed above as well as the treatment for:

- wounds
- bone and joint injuries
- burns
- head, neck, and spine injuries
- exposure to harsh weather conditions

St. John ambulance provides a number of courses which teach basic ways of preserving life and lessening the effects of injuries. The Society offers a Standard First Aid course, which is a minimum of 16 hours and includes written and practical tests. Also offered is a Child Care in the Home course, which focuses on the care of infants and pre-school children. This course is 12 to 15 hours long.

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Calling an ambulance

Always remember that in any emergency you can save a life by knowing what to do before an ambulance and medical help arrive. Time is of the utmost importance; the brain can die four to six minutes after an individual stops breathing.

If an emergency occurs and you must call an ambulance, dial the emergency number given on the first page of your telephone directory. Ask for your local:

- hospital
- police station
- fire department

- Give your address or location, state the problem, and give your telephone number in that order.
- Give an accurate description of the location, with landmarks to assist the driver and save time.
- Ask the dispatcher what life-saving actions you should take.
- Do not hang up until you are told what to do.

- Keep the victim warm, lying down, and quiet.
- Tell the victim that help is on the way' be reassuring and calm.
- If possible, meet the ambulance.
- Give the ambulance crew any information you have about the patient and the illness or accident when it is requested.
- Tell the ambulance crew if you are qualified to help, but give help only when requested and according to their instructions.
- Do not try to help lift the stretcher unless you are asked.
- Help keep bystanders calm and clear of the area.
- Use a private car or taxi if the injury or illness is minor.

Fire safety

Taking precautions

- Contact the local fire department and ask for a representative to come to your home to discuss fire safety with the children as well as with you.
- The local fire department can recommend an appropriate fire extinguisher and smoke detector, and the most effective place to install them. They can also help to draw up the best evacuation plan for your home.
- Practise the evacuation plan regularly and every time a new child joins your child care group.
- With practice, children aged three and over can be taught to react quickly and in a specific way to a given signal and move to the area chosen in your evacuation plan.
- Always keep exits uncluttered.
- Never use permanent bars to lock windows that may have to be used as fire exits.
- If there is a fire, accompany children safely out of the building; do not assume they can find their won way. Make sure they do not return tot the building.

Smoke detectors

- Approved smoke detectors should be installed on each floor of the house.
- Never obstruct access to an extinguisher.
- Check to make sure that the seals of the tamper indicator are not broken.
- Check for any damage or defects, such as damaged hose, clogged nozzles,

corrosion, leakage.

- Check to be sure that the maintenance record is kept up to date.
- At least once a year, a knowledgeable person should examine the fire extinguishers to make sure that they are in good working order.
- Always keep the fire department's telephone number beside your telephone. Memorize the number if possible.

If fire breaks out

- Remain calm. Always speak to children in a firm, distinct, and calm voice.
- After detecting fire, sound the alarm and get everyone out of the home.
- Call the fire department from a neighbour's home. Always give your address first in case you get interrupted.
- Never open a door without checking it for heat first. If a door is hot or warm, leave it closed and go to a window. Wait by an open window. Place bedding at door cracks to keep smoke out.
- Smoke (hot gas) rises, so stay low, near the floor. An open interior stairwell can act as a chimney, allowing heat and smoke to rise to the highest floor level.
- Tell the fire fighters immediately if anyone of left in the building.
- If you have to break a window, use a chair or heavy object. Remove jagged pieces of glass from the frame.
- In case you have to exit from a second or third floor, have accessible a fire escape rope or ladder.
- Once outside, never return to the house for possessions.

Grease fires

- Baking soda from a container kept near the stove will put out small fires caused by spilled fat or oil.
- If a pan of fat or oil catches fire, smother it with a lid or saucepan. Always wear oven mitt to remove the pan from the heat.

Fabric fires

- If clothing catches fire, first warp and then roll the victim in a blanket to remove all the air. Douse the victim with water. Don't run; this fans the flame.
- The *Hazardous Products Act* sets standards and carries out tests to make sure that cloth articles that are sold commercially don't burn too fast.
- It is important to protect yourself and children. Follow these precautions:
    - Don't be careless when near sources of high heat or open flame.
    - Watch sleeves of clothes. Don't drag them over the hot element of a

stove.

- Fabrics with a raised fibre surface tend to burn faster than fabrics with a smooth surface.
- Open-weave fabrics burn faster than tightly-woven fabrics.
- Loose-fitting garments with flaring skits or sleeves, ruffles, and trimmings ignite easily and burn rapidly.

When you are using fabrics either for ordinary wear or in play activities, you might find the following information useful.

- Lightweight fabrics (for example, cotton, linen, rayon) will burst into flame more easily and burn faster than heavier weight fabrics (for example, nylon, polyester, acrylic. These heavier weights fabrics do not ignite readily, and once on fire they tend to drip and might stop burning.
- Wool and silk do not ignite easily; they burn slowly and tend to stop burning on their own.

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Lost Children

A caregiver should be with children when they are outside; however, there is always the chance that a child may wander away from your property and get lost. The following precautions can help prepare you for such a possibility.

- Explain carefully to each child where the boundaries of the play area are; be sure that the children understand where they can play.
- Make sure that every child either knows your telephone number or carries it.
- Encourage group gatherings when children are playing away from your yard.
- Caution children never to wander off alone. Tell them to:
  - Stay close to the group
  - Stay close to the home base
  - Understand the rules of supervision
- If they get lost, tell children to:
  - Stay calm
  - Stay put and do not wander any farther
  - Telephone you (the child should know or have your telephone number).
- If a child has wandered off, you should take the following action at once:
  - Methodically search the house and yard
  - Have a description of the child ready
  - Telephone the police
  - Get a back-up support person to stay with the other children while you are searching
  - Check all known play areas of the child
  - Check the child's home.

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Food and nutrition

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Food and Nutrition

As a caregiver, you have an influence on children's eating habits and food choices. It is important not only to provide foods that are nutritionally sound but to follow good mealtime practices and promote a healthy attitude towards food. Our food choices and habits as adults are largely a product of our early experiences.

Begin by examining your own diet and eating habits. Recognize that there are many reasons why adults select and consume food. They eat, for example, out of boredom, frustration, and anger, and rarely does this make them feel better.

Developing healthy attitudes

You can help children to have a healthy attitude towards food by keeping these guidelines in mind.

- Don't use food as a reward for good behaviour or as a comfort for a cut or bruise. Instead, tell children you are pleased with them or offer them a reassuring hug. Food is for satisfying hunger.

- Never force children to eat or threaten them if they do not eat. To insist on a clean plate only encourages overeating. Threats can strengthen the resolve of children not to eat, or upset them so it is difficult for them to eat or swallow, or create a battleground for a power struggle.
- Don't deny children food as punishment. Food is for growing and staying healthy an should not be turned into a weapon.

Mealtime routines

- Try to make mealtimes as relaxed and unhurried as possible. It is easier for children to chew and swallow in a pleasant, social atmosphere.
- Avoid strenuous activities before meals. These can make children too excited or tired to eat properly. A quiet activity, such as reading a story, is a much better appetizer.

- If you give children a comfortable place to eat and child-sized dishes, they will feel welcome and at ease.
- Allow children to participate at mealtimes as much as possible. They can help set the table, serve the food, and clear the table afterwards.
- Serve the food in small serving bowl, and whenever possible allow children to help themselves to the amount they want. Initially, they may take too much or too little, but they will learn in time how much they can eat and will then be one step closer to caring for their own needs.
- When you are introducing a new food to children, offer only a small portion and do not force them to eat it. They will be much more willing to try new foods if they know they don't have to eat them. If they refuse a particular food on one occasion, try again later.
- If you give children attractively arranged foods of different colours, tastes, and textures, you offer meals that are more appealing.
- Some children find it easier to eat if the different foods on their plates do not touch each other.
- The risk of choking on food can be reduced by keeping a close watch on children, especially when small, round, and smooth foods are served.

Eating habits

- While children are learning to feed themselves, a mess is inevitable. Learning to put food into their mouths, to eat solid foods, to use eating utensils, and to drink from a cup are major accomplishments for children. Tidiness and table manners will come later.
- It is easier to teach children good eating habits and table manners if you eat with them, giving them an opportunity to follow you example. This will also reduce the need for verbal reminders.
- Keep in mind that children are vulnerable to the messages they get from adults. Words of encouragement and recognition of their efforts are more likely to succeed in getting them to try new foods or improve their skills with a knife and fork than telling them what poor eaters they are.

Problems at mealtimes

- When you are confronted with a feeding problem, it is best to relax and not attach too much importance to the issue.
- Between the ages of one and three, the growth rate of children slows down. At the same time, their ability and interest in exploring are increasing . So they may not want as much food and may regard mealtimes as an intrusion of their playtime.
- Occasionally, children may seem preoccupied with eating one type of food to the exclusion of all others. Unless this craving is for a food of questionable nutritional value, it is best to relax and wait until they get over it.
- Like any adult, children will have a few dislikes. Another food from the same food group may be more acceptable. But often, if the dislike is treated casually, they will probably be willing to try that food again at a later date. If the texture or smell of cooked vegetables is unpleasant, raw vegetables and vegetable juices and be offered.

Planning meals

- Composing healthy, interesting menus can be a challenge. It involves selecting nutritious foods which are appealing to young children and within your budget. Food high only in calories or foods that are over-processed or high in sugar should be restricted because they may spoil their appetite for more nutritious food.
- You may have to take into account a child's allergies and religious restrictions.

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Canada's Food Guide

The Ontario Milk Marketing Board Nutrition Communications Department has adapted Canada's Food Guide to meet the needs of preschoolers. The size of each serving from the four food groups is reduced, while the number of servings is increased. Here is an abbreviated version of the adaption.

Milk and milk products

- Includes milk, yogurt, and cheese
- Four to six child-sized servings a day
- Example of a child's serving: 125 ml (1/2 cup) of milk, 30 g (one ounce) of cheese, or 125 ml (1/2 cup) yogurt

Meat, fish, poultry, and alternatives

- Includes meat, fish, poultry, eggs, peanut butter, dried peas, and beans
- Three to four child-sized servings a day
- Example of a child's serving: 30 g to 60 g (one to two ounces) of cooked fish, one egg, 30 ml (2 tablespoons) of peanut butter, 125 ml (1/2 cup) beans

Breads and cereals

- Includes whole grain bread, muffins, rice, and pasta
- Three to six child-sized servings a day
- Example of a child's serving: ½ to one slice of bread, one muffin, 125 ml (1/2 cup) cooked cereal

Fruits and vegetables

- Good sources of vitamin A: carrots, sweet potatoes, spinach, and broccoli
- Good sources of vitamin C: oranges, tomatoes, broccoli, and green peppers
- Four or more child-sized servings a day
- Example of a child's serving: 100 to 125 ml (1/2 to 1/3 cup) of unsweetened juice, 75 to 125 ml (1/4 cup) of fresh or cooked fruits and vegetables

Using Canada's Food Guide is a starting point for planning a menu for children in your care. Remember to choose foods from each of the four groups and to plan snacks that

will complement the daily lunch. Include finger food such as vegetable sticks and fruit sections and introduce new foods one at a time. Serve a tried-and-true food with a "mystery" food.

When choosing foods rich in protein, remember dried peas and beans are healthy and low-cost alternatives to meat, fish, and poultry. However, while protein from animal sources contains the amino acids needed by the body for growth and tissue repair, the protein found in legumes, bread, and cereals may lack some amino acids. By combining legumes (including navy beans, kidney beans, chick peas, and lima beans) with rice, corn, wheat, sesame seeds, barley, or oats, the proteins will be complete.

Omit food that obviously contains salt, such as potato chips, crackers, and pretzels.

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Snacks

- If children are eating well and are active, snacks may be offered as part of the regular daily meal plan.
- Snack foods should be nutritious and given one-and-a-half to two hours before the next meal.
- Offer foods that are nutritional and do not cause tooth decay. Choose foods that are high in nutrients and low in sugar, such as unflavoured milk, plain yogurt, muffins, raw fruits or vegetables, and unsweetened juices.

Protecting teeth

When the bacterial enzymes in saliva combine with sugar, acids are produced. These acids are strong enough to dissolve the minerals in tooth enamel, exposing the interior of the tooth to decay.

Milk, juice, or unsweetened drinks cause the bacteria naturally present in the mouth to combine with the sugars found in the liquid. The combination forms and acid that could cause enamel to be so weakened that the baby teeth have to be capped to prevent damage to the second set of teeth. Babies should not be left with bottles in their mouths.

By contrast, the complex carbohydrates found in fruits and vegetables, grains and cereals are broken down into simple sugars in the intestines, not in the mouth.

Feeding babies

If you are caring for infants, food and feeding schedules should be determined by parents, together with their doctor. Parents may supply the child's formula and instructions. The addition of solid foods should be determined by parents and their doctor and adapted to a child's specific needs.

- Be sure to ask parents how much their babies usually eat. Always follow quantity measurements carefully in mixing formulas. If you add more formula than is called for or dilute it with extra fluid, you can upset the careful balance of nutrients and fluid. Formula that is too weak can lead to malnutrition; formula that is too strong can lead to kidney problems.
- Most physicians delay the introduction of solid foods until infants are four months old. The actual time should be determined by a physician.
- Introduce only one new food each week; watch for symptoms of intolerance.
- To prevent choking when feeding, place babies in a sitting or near-sitting position.
- After feeding, always lay babies down on their stomachs with their heads to one side to prevent choking or vomiting.

- Be gentle and relaxed when spoon-feeding babies; use a small spoon.
- Do not put the spoon too far into the mouth or press on the tongue; this can cause choking and gagging.
- Burp babies well after feeding solids and fluids.
- The acid in some juices (for example, orange juice) can irritate the skin. Wipe juice off a baby's face.
- Always test the temperature of fluids on the inside of your arm before feeding babies; the temperature should be lukewarm.
- Always check labels of foods and fluids to determine whether you should dilute them. Some juices can be too concentrated for a baby's stomach and should be diluted.

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Infant learning activities

Birth to 12 months
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Infant Learning Activities

The following information illustrates some of the highlights in child development. It is intended as a guide to understanding a child's abilities and skills.

Remember that each child is different and each develops at an individual pace. For example, a child who has discovered the freedom of walking may not be interested in trying out new words.

The information will help you select activities that are suited to each child's abilities and that encourage exploration and development.

Birth to 12 months

Motor development

Gross motor

- Give babies freedom to move in order to let them learn to creep, crawl, and turn over. Play exercise games, such as moving their arms and legs. When they have gained more control over their back muscles (at about three months), they enjoy sitting up for short periods. Toys held in front of them will encourage them to reach out and grasp.

- Around six months babies will probably start to explore the possibilities of moving about; their attempts to roll, crawl, and creep should be helped by a rug or blanket which will not slip or buckle underneath them. Provide babies with the opportunity to pull themselves up to a standing position, using solid furniture which they won't be able to trip over.

- The ages at which babies begin to walk vary a great deal. Take your cues from them. If they appear interested, offer support and encouragement. At any show of fear or reluctance, stop and try again another time.

Fine Motor

- Very young infants will respond to bright objects and toys placed where they can see them. Crib toys safely attached to the crib will attract their attention and encourage them to practise reaching and grasping.

- Small toys and objects that are safe will encourage babies to grasp and examine objects. Choose objects that vary in shape, colour, and texture.

- One day at feeding time, you will find an infant eager to attempt to feed himself/herself. Help him/her drink from a cup, provide finger foods, and a spoon of his/her own to use when he/she is ready and interested. Spills and a mess are part of the process. Opportunities that encourage him/her to practise will help him/her to improve his skills.

Sensory powers and learning

- Provide toys that invite babies to use their sense of touch and that are safe to bang and put in their mouths.

- Give infants soft plastic balls or soft rag dolls to grasp.

- Provide a variety of things to look at, even when babies are very young; hang a mobile over the crib or playpen.

- Play games by moving bright objects from side to side or in a circle. Talk about what you are doing. When babies are older, play similar games holding them in your lap. Move toys in front of their eyes. If they try to grasp a toy, let them have it to explore.

- Provide a "busy box" or "activity board". Put into a box or attach to a board such things ass a door knob, latch, roller-skate wheel.

- The best way for infants to learn how things look as they move is to let them move things themselves and watch them change. Roll a ball towards them and let them try to move it themselves.

- Hide part of a toy under a cloth or blanket. Encourage a child to hunt for it. Move an interesting object slowly behind your back.

- Place an object in a paper bag and encourage a child's effort to find it.

Self-awareness

- A blanket or toy from home is comforting to babies in an unfamiliar setting. Never tease or become angry with their need for comfort toys. It helps them cope with anxious moments.

- Named parts of the body. Hold a mirror in front of an infant and point to each part as it is named.

- Encourage an infant's attempts to roll over, sit up, crawl, and explore.

Socio-emotional development

- Use a baby's name whenever you talk to him/her. Touch him/her gently and soothingly. Show different expressions. An older baby will attempt to mimic some of your actions.

- Hold a baby while he/she is receiving his bottle, rather than propping the bottle up for him/her in his crib.

Language

- Respond to the coos and gurgles of infants; this is their way of speaking to you. Smile and speak to them again. Imitate their sounds; show they are important. Even before they understand words, babies will associate them with a pleasant experience.
- Talk about what you are doing: " Let's change your diaper." Name objects, provide words to describe the baby's feelings.
- Older babies make sounds that are similar to words. Rather than imitate the sounds, say the word correctly.
- Use short sentences conveying a simple thought or instruction.
- Babies like to be sung to and will not criticize your voice.
- Babies like to play with their fingers and toes; count their toes for them. They will enjoy "Peek-a-boo" and "This little piggy went to market".

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12 to 18 months

Motor development

Gross Motor

- Provide pull toys and push toys, particularly ones that make a noise.
- Give children of this age large balls to kick and smaller balls to catch and throw.
- Set up an obstacle course with things to climb over and a surface to crawl under.
- Take children for short walks.
- Obtain a plastic or wooden hammer and a pounding bench and let children hammer the pegs.

Fine Motor

- Provide objects varying in size, colour and texture for children to hold, feel and learn about. Show them picture books and let them turn the pages.
- Give children large crayons for drawing, paints for finger painting, and play dough.
- Offer blocks for building towers. First attempts to place and object on top of another will prepare children for more complex creations later on.

Sensory powers and learning

- Choose activities that involve the concept of size. Obtain big to little stacking toys. Put small toys in large toys. Blow up a balloon and, while the children are

watching, gradually let the air out; try it again, letting the air out quickly (so that the balloon flies across the room).

- Put small objects in a large container and take them out. Then let children do the same.
- Let children play with a variety of objects (things that float and things that sink) in a basin of water. Provide sand to play with. Add digging tools and small vehicles.
- Play music, sing songs, and encourage children to clap in rhythm or bang a pot or cardboard box.

Self-awareness

- Provide a mirror, hats to put on, purses to fill. Talk about the clothes children are wearing. Use their names when you talk to them.
- Children may try to dress themselves. It is a gradual process; give them time and encourage their attempts.
- Children's efforts to be independent will be apparent at feeding time as well. Sit and talk to them while they are eating. Encourage their efforts to feed themselves.

Socio-emotional development

- Involve children in house hold activities. They will be interested in adult activities and attempt to imitate your actions.
- During trips, talk to children about what they are seeing.
- By playing with dolls, children can practise doing many of the things your are doing for them. They can give the doll a bottle, toys to play with, naps, and "pretend" food.
- Place blocks in a container and shake them. Let children try to do the same.
- Provide a toy telephone and show children how to dial. Have telephone conversations.

Language

- Talk to children in short, complete sentences. Ask them to complete simple tasks, to place a toy on a shelf, or to show you something. Put their actions into words. Use words to describe how things feel (soft, smooth, rough) or new concepts (under, or in). Demonstrate with objects.
- Show children pictures of objects and label items for them.
- Use words like " after" and "before" so that children will begin to understand the difficult concept of time. ("Before we have lunch, we will read a story", or "After we put the toys away, it will be time for Mom to arrive.")
- Ask children to name familiar objects.

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Resources for home caregivers

Meeting other home caregivers in the community
Resources
- Public health units
- Fire department/Police department
- Public library
- Recreation centres/YM-YWCAs/Ethnic organizations
- Women's resource centres
- Public health nutritionists and dietitians
- School/Child care centres
- Parent and child resource centres/Toy lending libraries

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Resources for Home Caregivers

Providing care that is safe and secure and that responds to children's needs is important work in your community. As a child care provider, try to meet other child care providers in your neighbourhood and seek out services that can give you information and add to the activities you are able to offer in your home.

Meeting other home caregivers in the community

Locating other people in your neighbourhood who provide child care in their homes is the first step towards building a network of support and information. Together it is possible to organize projects and exchange information that benefits you, your service, and the children in your care. Many joint activities can be undertaken. Here are some examples:

- organize group outings or a play group
- sharing toys and equipment
- purchasing food, craft materials, and equipment in bulk
- developing a local listing of child care services
- arranging for substitute care if a provider is ill or if there is an emergency
- sharing child care experiences and activities

How do you get started? Contact your local public health nurse; he/she may be aware of other people who are providing child care in their homes. Check child care listings in your local newspaper. Community Information Centres, neighbourhood child care or community registries may list home child care providers. Toy lending libraries, parent and child drop-in centres or play groups may be used by people providing child care.

Licensed home-based child care is a child care service provided by individuals who choose to offer care in their own homes under the supervision of a licensed home child care agency. The agency, which is licensed by the Ministry of Community and Social Services, must comply with the regulations of the *Day Nurseries Act*. It supervises and inspects homes to ensure that the standards set out in the Act are met.

The number and ages of children enroled in an agency home depends on the ages and the number of the caregiver's own children (restricted by regulation).

In addition to monitoring the child care arrangement and ensuring through home visits

(or inspections) that the care is adequate, agencies may offer support with the following activities and resources for home caregivers:

- information about child development, first aid, safety, health and nutrition, and suggestions for activities that are suitable for the ages of the children; caregiver training through workshops and meetings and during regular home visits
- opportunities for networking with other caregivers through meetings, special outings, and events
- recruitment and referral of parents needing child ca
- collection of parent fees, establishing policies for holidays and vacations, record keeping and arranging for back-up care when a caregiver is ill
- toy and equipment exchange and lending

Because it is supervised and supported by an agency, some parents find licensed home-based child care preferable to an informal unlicensed arrangement. For more information contact your local Ministry of Community and Social Services office.

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Resources

Some or all of the following resources may be available in your community and you will probably know of several more.

Public health units

Public health nurses provide counselling, teaching and co-ordination of community resources. Some may also provide instruction in child guidance.

Fire department/Police department

Officials from both these departments will provide assistance in fire safety, home evacuation plans, and traffic safety.

Public library

Books on activities for children, parenting, and child development are available at your local library. Once they know the ages of the children in your care, librarians will recommend and help you choose story-books they will enjoy. Toys, records, and films may be available on loan, and there may be activities such as story-telling, puppet shows, and movies.

Recreation centres/YM-YWCAs/Ethnic organizations

Many organizations such as these run a variety of programs suitable for children, including sports and crafts and exercise, swimming, and entertainment activities.

Women's resource centres

These provide support and education services, research materials, legal services, and information on community resources. Some of them may also offer information on parenting and child development.

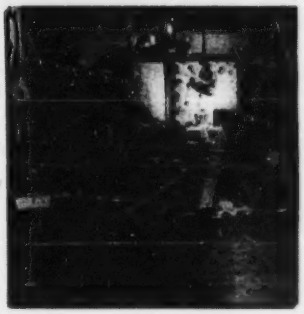
Public health nutritionists and dieticians

These professionals will give you information on nutrition and help you plan menus.

School/Child care centres

From schools and child care centres, you may be able to obtain information on child development and activity ideas. Many have outdoor recreational facilities available.

Child Care Resource Centres



Child Care Resource Centres are located in many districts and countries throughout Ontario. These centres offer a variety of services and information for caregivers and parents. They provide you with an opportunity to meet people who are providing services similar to yours.

Although the combination of available services will vary from centre to centre, the following services may be offered.

- Discussion groups and workshops on topics that range from child development and activities to first aid and nutrition. Some centres have workshops with topics of special interest to home caregivers such as the business side of offering a child care service
- Toy lending libraries
- Play groups and 'drop in' programs for children and adults; a few centres offer play groups for caregivers and children only
- Caregiver registry services to help parents locate child care services
- Information about child care and about services in your community.

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Finding a bargain

Staying within budget and, at the same time, providing the children in your care with a variety of play materials can be made easier with a little scrounging. Visit local businesses in your neighbourhood; describe your efforts to offer creative activities and enlist their aid. They may let you have an assorted collection of discards which children can transform into works of art. Arts and craft materials, ingredients for home-made instruments and books, construction and woodworking supplies and dress-up clothes, such as hats and shoes, can often be obtained free or at a very low price.

These are examples of businesses and institutions you might contact and what they might have to offer:

- butcher shops
  - brown butcher paper
- camera supply stores
  - styrofoam used in packing, boxes
- drapery and carpet companies
  - fabric remnants and samples, spools
- firms that use computers
  - computer paper and cards
- garages
  - car tires, inner tubes, road maps
- goodwill and Salvation army thrift shops
  - dress-up clothes and accessories, toys and equipment
- leather goods manufacturers
  - leather and suede scraps

- lumber yards
  - scrap wood, wood chips and shavings
- newspapers
  - end rolls of newsprint
- paint/wallpaper stores
  - sample books, remaindered rolls, paint chips
- printing shops
  - end rolls of paper
- restaurants
  - stir sticks, coffee creamers, ice cream containers
- libraries and schools
  - used books and furniture.

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